

Wharton (H. R.)
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CHARLES T. HUNTER, M.D.



Read before the Phila. County Medical Society, by
H. R. WHARTON, M.D.

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1843-1884.

Charles T. Hunter was born on the 13th of January, 1843, in the town of New Bloomfield, Trumbull County, Ohio, where he resided until he was ten years of age, when he removed with his parents to New England.

He received his preliminary education at the Brattleboro High School, Vermont, the Ipswich Academy, New Hampshire, and the Chancey Hall School, Boston. After leaving school in the spring of 1864, he went to Kansas, where he engaged in business; but in the fall of the same year he came to Philadelphia and began the study of medicine, matriculating in the Medical Department of the University of Pennsylvania, under the preceptorship of the late Dr. H. Lenox Hodge, and his associates, Drs. Bolling and Hutchinson. He was graduated from the Medical Department of the University of Pennsylvania in 1868, and was elected a resident physician to the Pennsylvania Hospital in the year 1869, where he served a term of one year. Upon leaving the hospital he was appointed an assistant in Prof. Agnew's clinic in the University of Pennsylvania, and soon gained the position of chief of clinic; he also acted as Prof. Agnew's private assistant, and in both capacities he served up to the time of his last illness. He also held the positions of Demonstrator of Surgery in the University of Pennsylvania, Surgeon to the Out-patient Department of the Pennsylvania Hospital, Surgeon to the Episcopal Hospital, Assistant Surgeon to University Hospital, and Demonstrator of Anatomy in the University of Pennsylvania; to this latter position he was elected to fill the vacancy left by the death of the late Dr. H. Lenox Hodge, and discharged its duties with marked ability for about one year, when ill-health compelled him to retire from active work.

He was also well and favorably known to many members of the profession as a "quiz master" on surgery in that venerable quiz institution, the Philadelphia Medical Institute, where he served until 1878, when his increasing work compelled him to retire from this position.

He was also a Fellow of the College of Physicians and of the Academy of Surgery, a member of the Pathological Society, and was also a very active member of the Alumni Society of the Medical Department of the University of Pennsylvania, being at the time of his death vice president of the executive committee of that body.

During the year 1873-74 Dr. Hunter went abroad, and devoted some time to microscopical study in Klein's laboratory.

During the summer of 1881, while operating upon a case of suppurating ovarian cyst, he received a wound of his left thumb,



which, for a time, was attended only by local symptoms, but gradually constitutional symptoms developed themselves, and the impairment of his general health became so marked that in the spring of 1882 he was compelled to retire from active work.

From this time for several months he was confined to his bed, but he slowly convalesced, so that in the autumn he was able to go abroad, where he spent some months, during which time his condition was much improved.

Upon his return to this city, his health was so much better that his friends were sanguine of his ultimate recovery; but this period of improvement, unfortunately, was only temporary, for he gradually began to lose ground, and finally died on April 27th, 1884.

Dr. Hunter, early in his professional career, showed a marked preference for, and devoted himself especially to, the study of surgery.

He also appreciated fully the importance of a thorough knowledge of anatomy in relation to this branch of medicine, and was an assiduous student of practical anatomy, first as an assistant demonstrator in the anatomical rooms of the University, and, later, doing each year a certain amount of dissection, and finally devoting much time to this subject in his capacity as demonstrator of anatomy.

Of his skill and knowledge in this respect, I can, perhaps, offer no better testimony than by recalling to many of those who have attended Prof. Agnew's lectures his beautiful dissections of hernia and the layers of the scalp.

As will be seen by reference to his many appointments, Dr. Hunter devoted himself especially to the practice of surgery, and that he had attained some considerable distinction in this branch of the profession, is not to be wondered at, when we consider the opportunities which he enjoyed and the diligence with which he applied himself to his special work.

He possessed many qualifications which fitted him for a surgeon—a naturally robust constitution, an even temper, a dignified manner, a well-balanced mind, a good knowledge of practical anatomy, a conservative disposition, and a matured judgment, all of which combined to produce in him a surgeon of no mean attainments. His powers of physical endurance were, to many of us who saw him in his hospital work, a matter of comment and wonder; for, indeed, it seemed that no amount of exertion or loss of rest was able to interfere with the regular performance of his accustomed duties. As a surgeon, he was conservative; but it was not the conservatism born of timidity, for when the exigencies of the case demanded it, he did not hesitate to resort to the most heroic measures. In his relations with his brother practitioners, his conduct was characterized by a scrupulous fairness and justice as

regarded their interests ; and I doubt not that there are many present this evening who can bear personal testimony to this statement, and to this characteristic may be attributed the well-earned regard which he enjoyed. For I think I can fairly say that not another man of his age had more friends in the profession. In his relations with his patients the same spirit prevailed ; their interests were his first consideration, and no amount of personal inconvenience was allowed to interfere with what he considered his duty toward them. In his official position he was thrown much with medical students, and among them his many sterling qualities and the personal interest he displayed in their welfare did not fail to create for him a widespread popularity.

Although he was most fearless in the expressions of his opinion, and the performance of what his convictions pointed out as his duty, no man was a greater respecter of authority than he ; none more willing than he to ask or receive advice from those whom, by their years or positions or attainments, he considered his superiors. One most prominent point in his character was his conscientiousness ; this was most clearly seen in the scrupulous attention which he paid to the duties which were entrusted to him ; indeed, I have heard Prof. Agnew, who was intimately associated with him both in public and private work, remark that he had never disappointed him in the performance of any duty.

There is to his many friends a peculiar sadness in his death at a time when his professional success was assured, at a time when the fruits of his diligence and faithfulness were within his grasp.

In concluding this imperfect tribute to his memory, I can only add that in his early removal this Society has lost a valuable member, the University of Pennsylvania an accomplished surgeon and teacher, and his numerous friends, a friend in whom many qualities combined to produce a true man.

